United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1176
6 July 1992

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in address at Ministerial Segment of Economic and Social Council, proposes "flexible, high-level intersessional mechanism" for swift response to new developments in economic and social sphere.

+ Madagascar, on behalf of Group of African States, requests urgent meeting of Security Council to "examine issue of violence in South Africa".

+ United Nations inspection team denied access to Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation for on-site inspection; monitoring of premises continues.

+ World Food Programme to aid Madagascar drought victims and Zairean refugees.

* * *

In his opening statement at the two-day High-level segment of the 1992 Economic and Social Council session this morning, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recommended to the participating Ministers that the Council introduce a flexible, high-level intersesssional mechanism, which would enable the Council and its bureau to respond in a continuing and timely way to new developments in the economic and social sphere. It should possess an "early warning" function, encompassing threats to security and well-being from such perils as the energy crisis, the burden of debt, the risk of famine and the spread of disease.

Pointing to the need for an "integrated approach" to the problems of this "new era", the Secretary-General called for a "change in the structure and methods of work throughout the United Nations system". Over the years, the complexity of the system, combined with its fragmentation and bureaucratization, had inhibited the role the Organization should play in the economic and social fields. Each of the principal organs, he added, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, had "a special and indispensable role to play in an integrated approach to human security in all its dimensions: political, social and economic".

(more)

The Secretary-General also addressed the need for coordination, stating that the resources of the entire United Nations system, the specialized agencies, the international financial institutions and the development programmes needed to be harnessed in international cooperation for the diminution of poverty and the realization of economic opportunity for all.

The Secretary-General noted a Summit for Social Development had been proposed in order to build a network of communications where "few bridges or roads exist today".

The restructured Economic and Social Council session has been divided into three segments, the first of which is the high-level segment with ministerial participation by a number of countries in a discussion of the role of the United Nations in enhancing international cooperation for development.

The two other segments concern the coordination of policies and activities of the United Nations bodies and agencies, and operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

* * *

A meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation in South Africa has been requested by Madagascar, on behalf of the Group of African States. The request, made in the context of a resolution adopted at the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) last month, calls for "the urgent convening of a meeting ... to examine the issue of violence in South Africa and to take all appropriate action to put an end to it as well as to create conditions for negotiations leading towards a peaceful transition towards a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa".

The OAU resolution expressed grave concern about the "escalation of violence in South Africa targeted at black communities and, in particular the recent massacre at Boipatong Township", and the need for the international community to investigate the causes of the violence and to adopt the necessary measures for its early end.

In a related development, an International Hearing on Political Violence in South Africa, co-sponsored by the Special Committee against Apartheid and organized by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, has been scheduled for 14 and 15 July in London.

The Chairman of the Special Committee, Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), will deliver the keynote address and the Most Reverend Trevor Huddleston, President of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, will preside over the Hearing. Testimony will be presented by South Africans as well as international legal and human rights organizations. The participants will consider measures - including contributions the international community can make - to sustain the process of peaceful negotiations on the transition to democracy in South Africa.

(more)

Secretary-General told a press conference in London on Thursday, 1 July, that the United Nations was considering ways to help bring about the resumption of talks in South Africa, though any such move would require the support of the South African Government and the Security Council. He is expected to report to the Security Council on talks he held last week while in Nigeria, Senegal and the United Kingdom concerning the South African situation. Document S/24232

* * *

The Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament has reported that a United Nations inspection team had been denied access to what Iraq termed the headquarters building of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation which had been designated for inspection in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991). Iraq claimed that no activities related to section C of that resolution were undertaken in the building.

According to a press release issued by the Special Commission, this refusal to allow access was contrary to resolution 687 and 707 (1992) as well as the status agreement between Iraq and the Commission. The Special Commission is mandated by the Security Council to monitor and to inspect the activities of the Iraqi authorities in the area of weapons of mass destruction - biological, chemical and nuclear.

The team has been monitoring the exits of the facility since its arrival on Sunday, 5 July, to ensure that evidence is not removed. The Chairman of the Special Commission, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, was expected to brief Security Council members today on the situation in Baghdad during consultations.

* * *

Some 320,000 victims of the southern African drought in Madagascar, and 15,000 Zairean refugees are to receive emergency assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP), according to two recent announcements.

The Agency said it would provide the most seriously affected populations in Madagascar with some 25,000 metric tonnes food aid, costing $8 million over an eight-month period, in order to avert an unfolding tragedy of mass deaths from starvation. According to the WFP this year's drought is worse than one which occurred in 1986, leaving thousands of people dead from starvation. It is the second time this year that the Agency has provided relief to Madagascar, which is also in the grip of an economic crisis following months of strikes and political instability. Some 700,000 people are currently in need of food-aid, the Agency said, and those numbers likely to swell to 1 million by the end of the year.

The Zairean refugees fled their country last February, following military harassment and political unrest, and sought refuge in neighbouring Uganda. So far, the refugees have been assisted by two other relief agencies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but food is quickly running out. The WFP says it

(more)

will provide 1,345 metric tonnes of food aid at an estimated cost of $650,000. The rations are expected to feed the refugees for the next six months.

The announcements came as Ministers of the WFP's 36 member States concluded discussions at the eighteenth session of the World Food Council in Nairobi, and launched an appeal to the international community to help reverse Africa's deteriorating food and hunger situation. The Ministers said there could be no peace as long as millions endured poverty and hunger and noted that while most developing regions had made some headway in the 1980s in reducing the number of hungry and malnourished people in their population, Africa had shown the largest increase.

* *** *